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noiseless spider

LITERARY magazine



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THE NOISELESS SPIDER

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Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial board of *The Noiseless Spider* agrees with Henry Miller that the pangs of birth relate not to the body but to the spirit. It was demanded of us to know love, experience union and communion, and thus achieve liberation from the wheel of life and death. But we have chosen to remain this side of Paradise and to create through art the illusory substance of our dreams. In a profound sense we are forever delaying the act. We flirt with destiny and lull ourselves to sleep with myth. We die in the throes of our own tragic legends, like spiders caught in our own web.

Letter from the Editor

The students of the English Club at the University of New Haven have worked hard this semester and we are pleased to be able to provide the school — it's students and faculty — with a magazine of literary talent. This issue of *The Noiseless Spider* contains poetry, two essays, and four short stories. It is designed to give students a chance to experiment with and to learn and succeed in the world of creative writing.

I would like to thank all of the club members for their ideas and dedication to make those ideas work. I would also like to thank all of the students who contributed to *The Noiseless Spider*, for it is those contributions that made the magazine a reality.


The English Club has many innovative ideas for the coming semester. Movies shown in the Student Center Lounge and weekly movie reviews are just an example of what can happen when students come together for a common purpose and to share pleasure. *The Noiseless Spider* will only improve if you leave your thoughts in its pages.

Thank you,
Robert Kimball
Editor

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JOURNALISM and LITERATURE: Separate yet equal

Phil Loscoe Jr.

Although in the minds of many they are closely grouped, the fields of journalism and literature are worlds apart. Thomas Wolff, practitioner of both rather distinct disciplines, once said "Literature, be it classical or modern, transcends art, where journalism is an extension of science." Wolff's analysis stands as perhaps the most incisive comment on the differences between the two "arts," yet fostered criticism from those practicing journalism as belittling their craft.

As someone else once said, "The truth hurts."

Literature may indeed be the essence of art; if not on the merits of the work produced by writers then on the voluminous contribution to the art on the part of those writers. Journalists, for their part, have certainly turned out incredible amounts of nouns and verbs, yet their work is far more cryptic and a great deal more structured than their literary counterpart.

The concept of structure is perhaps the most visible distinction between the two. Journalism is dictated by a defined style. Editors, constantly striving for uniformity, ensure predisposed style by altering the journalist's work to fit the desired style. Literature has none of this. Basic grammar is an absolute must in journalism, whereas literature has a great deal more freedom. Journalistic subject matter is often contingent upon many factors: taste, editor's discretion and even constituency pressure, both from a reader and advertiser standpoint. The subject matter in the literary realm is virtually limitless.

Wolff's aforementioned reference to journalism as a science is spawned by such constraints. It could be argued that journalism is a more industrial endeavor and that literature, although a money-making venture, is farther removed from the industrial image.

Because there are so many standardized confines around which to work in journalism, the institution clearly has many attributes normally associated with science. Literature, conversely, has the freedom and room for intellectual expansion necessary for it to be considered a true art; an art devoid of most industrial considerations and full of the existence that humans need.

Journalists stung by the words of Thomas Wolff should take heart, however. The two entities can, indeed must, co-exist in our society and in their intended roles. Journalism provides us with the information necessary to understand the world in which we live and literature provides for the kind of intellectual exercise necessary to keep this society ahead of all others in terms of intellectual strength, not military strength.

This final distinction, one of roles, is the most important one of all when weighing the merits of journalism and literature, as it serves to place the two institutions where they rightfully belong; separate, yet equal.

Ones Who Know

Have you ever wondered

*if sky has a ceiling
or hell a floor
if your dreams
are indeed the extreme.*

*Much is lost in the space between stars,
of personal cost and human trials
that can be found, in the lecher's cough
and prostitute's smile.*

*Ask the ones
the ones who know*

*the old
the idiots
the junkies and geniuses.*

— Mark Cherry

Like Music

*Existing in no beginning there was no overture
pretentious opus or beginning.
Mid-rift they flex on the staff,
its ledgered lines and bodered measures washed into free form,*

*she the chords C, G sixth, A
He the baseline D, B augmented, C.*

*The conductor ignored
baton broken, he would not let go
close your eyes,
hush the oboe, revive the strings
step the tempo into Allegro.*

*As the movement fell to silence
and the piece ended.*

*they lingered into sleep
the vanishing sleep, of E minor
suspended.*

— Mark Cherry

Memorial Stadium, Baltimore

Winter is gone. And with the new warmth of spring I feel very, very young again; it is baseball season. I suppose most baseball fans are transported back to their childhood; back to their heroes gone, but not forgotten. Each year I have to tell myself to ignore the business side of baseball and to enjoy the game. I have ignored speculation about who would get the free agent. I have ignored announcements of salary arbitration decisions. I couldn't care less about television deals. Unfortunately, I couldn't care more about the strike; it ruined a summer for me.

Now opening day is almost here again. And again I am settling in for a long season of rooting for the Baltimore Orioles. I just don't want to go through last season's stretch drive again. In August, when I had the family on vacation at Ocean City, Maryland, the Birds were seven or eight games out. They still had a chance, and so I spent a good part of that seashore vacation in front of television sets. In September I was certain they were going to make it, only to be left heartbroken on that final Sunday.

With a new season coming on, I find myself thinking again of my boyhood trips to old Memorial Stadium. The Stadium sits at the end of a long, tree-lined road. Behind the trees are row houses. Each house is attached to another house; each house is exactly the same: the same paintjobs, the same dogs on the front lawn, the same people sitting on the front steps. Amidst this dullness rises the tall, round, gray hulk of Memorial Stadium. From the outside it is ugly cold cement. Inside, it is an oasis. No matter how many times I've gone into the stadium I've never gotten over the grass. It is somehow greener than green, always perfectly manicured, always soft and lush.

When the Orioles played baseball it was an event. When I was taken to the stadium I had to wear what my mother forced me to wear, black shoes and black pants and a stiff white shirt. I always knew exactly where I would sit. It depended on who was taking me. When my father and grandfather took me, driving in my grandfather's old, white Chevy Impala, we sat in the mezzanine. My father said he couldn't really see the game in the lower deck. And he didn't like sitting up high in the orange upper-deck seats, straining to see the ball. For him it had to be the calm of the mezzanine, where he could watch the game leisurely from the dark blue seats.

Neither my father or grandfather said anything during the game, except when someone made an error. I felt out of place in the dark-blue seats; my heroes were on the field and I had to root, and root loudly.

If I went to a game with my cousins, all two or three years older than I, we sat in the bleachers. A seat along the worn, dusty-brown benches behind the left or right-fielders was only fifty cents. A seat in the outfield gave us hope for watching a home-run and left us money in our pockets for hot dogs and soda. I felt out of place in the bleachers dressed so differently from everyone else. All around me were tee-shirted beer drinkers yelling obscenities down at the enemy outfielders. There was one time, though, my father and I sat in the bleachers. It was the night in July of 1968 when Denny McLain won his twentieth game on the way to a thirty-one season and the game was standing room only. The Tigers were winning easily, by five or six runs, when in the sixth inning, a Tiger hit another home-run. The ball landed in the left-field bleachers about ten rows in front of us. It was as if meat had been thrown to a pack of hungry lions: an all-out riot broke loose. As the police were pulling bodies out of the pile one by one, my father grabbed me by the collar and dragged me to the parking lot, never once answering any of my protests; never once heeding my assurances the Orioles would rally. The rally never came, though.

The best games were the ones my Uncle Joe took me to. Uncle Joe loved to spend money, and the harder the ticket the better the ticket. For us that meant box seats behind one of the dugouts. My favorite seats were behind the Orioles' dugout, where I could get a close-up view of all my players. My Uncle would yell encouragement to each player as he came off the field, calling each by his first name. For years I thought he knew each player personally. If we sat on the third-base side behind the visitor's dugout, Dr. Jekyll became Mr. Hyde. My mild-mannered Uncle became a fury of insults, lashing out for a whole game at the third basemen. Once, against the Red Sox, a head popped out of the dugout while Uncle Joe was insulting the on-deck batter. Suddenly, there were two big, cold blue eyes on either side of a massive, beak-like nose. The player said nothing; he only stared at us. Uncle Joe smiled and said, "Yaz, you're a bum." It scared the hell out of me, and after that I always asked to sit on the first-base side, box seat or not.

I have not gone back to Memorial Stadium since 1969. I suppose I feel nothing will be the same again, and until my son is old enough to take to the Stadium I prefer TV to the quiet, expensive mezzanine. The Stadium has changed on me. There is now a center-field well which blocks the sight of a large, beautiful white mansion in the distance. The Orioles no longer wear their immaculate white uniforms; a white even brighter against the dingy flannel-grey of the visitors' uniforms. All the teams dress in bright, flashy multi-colored outfits. Most of all my heroes are no longer there. I liked Doug DeCinces, but he was never a Brooks Robinson. Eddie Murray is not Boog Powell. Ken Singleton is not Frank Robinson. I guess I understand why my father sat in the mezzanine quietly. For him baseball was only a game, not the even I felt it was. To my father, real baseball was the Yankee baseball of Joe Dimaggio and Phil Rizzuto. My days for real baseball are the Orioles of the sixties. But this doesn't bother me in the least. Now I love the game, not the players. There are new faces, new young boys dressed in uncomfortable clothes who worship the Murrays and the Singletons. That is the beautiful thing about baseball: the fathers sit and watch the game, while beside them their sons are loud and full of awe at the grass, greener than green, at the bright orange Oriole shirts, and at the brilliant play of their heroes. The more things change, the more they stay the same. Ah! It's baseball season again.

— *Peter Johnson*

The Last Hurrah

*Meet me in the park
after dark
where the tree toad's chirp is contrapuntal
to the caretaker's distant gruntle.*

*Do you know where I mean?
Smell your way there.
Pass the groundnut and the honeysuckle
'til you see the glint of my belt buckle*

*and we'll shoot peas
and discuss the petrified maple stump
that has the same shape as Melissa Strump*

*isn't that a scream?
We'll roll in a mound of clover dew
to soothe late summer sun-stings of me & you.*

*We'll reflect on the moon
which reflects on the pond
here the minnows are slithering hither and yond*

*and we'll stay 'til mom calls
that the night air's grown cool
and we'll laugh
and think not of tomorrow*

and school.

— Cheryl Ann Quigley

*From a snowy school lot
porcelain apples fly,
shattering on giggling tots
and other passers-by.*

— Cheryl Ann Quigley

*disembodied tongue
dances in the old man's mouth —
does his thinking for him.*

— Cheryl Ann Quigley

*With Stephen in the barn I lay, barely
feeling soft cow nudges
coaxing me to the sweet semi-consciousness
of early morn.*

*I rouse him.
We couple to the corner to relieve ourselves
leaving moist hay.*

*Through the old dutch door
misty sunlight sprays our bedding.
In the ray, Muffin suddenly appears
as if beamed to earth
from a nighttime of mysterious galactic adventures.*

*Ambling over, she nestles in the non-existent
place between us
for her daybreak.*

*How better than a neatly-sheeted four-poster
to sleep in God's room
in love.*

— Cheryl Ann Quigley

Nova

The full August moon more than sufficiently illuminated the couple's way through the trees. Billy didn't need the extra light though. He and Carol had been there so many times he could have sniffed his way. The gauze-like light of the moon made the forest look like the ruins of an ancient temple; with trees as pillars and bushes and rocks the toppled remains of once grand statues; tributes to things that were once great.

Wearing a blanket as a cape, he ran, danced and leaped among the ruins; stopping now and then so Carol could catch up.

"I feel like Oberon, King of the Fairies," he said. "Where is that Bottom? I want to fuck up his head."

"What are you talking about? And don't say that word, it's disgusting."

"Forgive me, my love. On this ethereal evening those things do best please me that befall preposterously!" He then drew the blanket around him and ducked behind a tree. "Now what are you doing?" she said with annoyance while clasping the picnic basket with both hands. "I disappear like a wily spright, my queen. But at your insistance I shall once again lead us to sacred ground."

"I now the way," she whispered. He took hold of her hand when she stumbled on the path.

"You O.K.?"

"Yes. Keep moving."

When they reached the tiny clearing, Billy unknotted the blanket and waved it around him like a matador spreading it evenly on the ground, then sommersaulted onto it landing supine. "You have got to be the strangest person I've ever met," she said. "That's why you love me, 'cause I'm so unique. Come out of the forest Titania!" he said to the silhouette. "Let me gaze upon your precious countenance." Carol sat next to him, crossing her legs and placed the basket in front of her. "No, no, no. That won't do at all," he said. "Lie down next to me. I have something for you."

"What is it? Is it in the basket?"

"You'll never know if you don't lie down right here," he said pushing his finger into the blanket by his side.

Carol slowly unfolded her legs and stretched out on her side resting her head on her arm. With a sinister laugh Billy gathered her in his arms and pressed his lips against hers. She pushed him away and rolled onto her stomach, burying her face in her folded arms.

"It's August and you're covered with ice. What's wrong? You miss Florida that much?" She sighed and turned her head away from him.

"I'm not staying," she said. "I'm going to keep my job down there. I like my life there."

"Well that's no reason to turn off to me. When I graduate this May I'll come down to be with you. No problem."

There was a long silence. Billy stared at the back of her head then down toward his feet and the little rushing river about ten feet away. The sound of the falls off to the right made Carol's silence all the more noticeable. If you closed your eyes, the falling waters sounded like the clouds let loose a torrent — a deafening, swampy torrent. "I've decided to go to grad school down there," he said.

"And how will you support yourself? You can't make too much money while you're in school."

"I'll get a part-time job and do some writing too. Another couple years and —"

"I can't wait another couple years. I want to have some stability. I want a nice house; a nice car." Billy thought for a moment. School was his only life for the past six years. He adored learning different things all the time. He enjoyed the freedom. "You're not responsible," she added. "You still live at home. Your mother does your laundry. I have determination now. I'm in line for a promotion already. There's a good chance that I'll be making decent money soon. I want to be successful."

Success. The word wasn't new to him. It didn't mean an apartment in Miami or a sports-car, sunshine life. Success was happiness and happiness was reading, learning, writing. It was watching the world and telling people about what you've seen. If money, came from that — fine. He wanted to be admired for what he knew, not how much he made a year.

"What's the matter, you don't love me anymore?"

"That's not the point. I've become used to a different life now."

"I thought I was part of your life. We've had some fantastic times together. We've been through a lot together." A pause . . . "We decided to let something go — together. *We* decided to let it go." He could see tears sparkle in her eyes. Carol bowed her head. "Why did you have to bring that up? We were in high school and much too young to accept that responsibility, I had to do it." "I had always hoped we could make it up to each other. You know — get married and have a family. We could love our children and give them everything; teach them about life — and death."

"Some memories hurt, Billy; some I'll never forget — ever."

Billy looked at the countless stars above him and then at the river. He thought about how you could touch the water and it would flow right on and you could never touch the same place again — never make the same ripple. How different were they? She didn't care about how waves were formed or the theories of the Creation. She didn't care about Mozart, Constable or Jonson. She wanted a house with three bathrooms and a two car garage. She wanted stocks and a tenth floor office with a view. She couldn't even remember who Adam Smith was.

Again she spoke. "You'll be in school forever. And any job you get will never get you enough money to support a family. You're too into your own thoughts." Billy looked at her beautiful face in the moonlight. It looked smooth and white.

"I'm going back to the car," she said. He listened to her footsteps fade into the woods. He was insulted and deeply hurt. She had unlimited desires and needs. Money — he began to despise the word and everything it could buy. If he had it, he could probably even buy Carol back. He shook his head slowly; what an absurd thought. She is lovely and she will be successful in anything she does because she knows what she wants and how much she wants.

He stood, picked up the picnic basket and walked to the edge of the falls. The water bouncing off the rocks in the moonlight looked like pearls and diamonds tossed into the air. Opening the basket, he gazed at the bottle of 1981 Mouton Cadet, the two crystal glasses and the picture of a diamond ring he cut out of a magazine. Laying the basket in the water, he watched as it tumbled over the falls and was lost in the darkness below. He reached into his back pocket and produced the book of sonnets. Flipping through the pages, he tore out number 116 and let it fall into the water.

His pain wasn't only from her leaving, but from the truth of her words about him. He looked into the sky again and all of the tiny points of light blurred and faded. He closed his eyes tightly. What was that word? The one where stars die but the light continues to shine on those millions of miles away even though the star's essence has been gone for years. He couldn't think of it. It didn't matter anyway.

— *R.W. Shortell Jr.*

Spoon River Lament
(to be read in the voice of a tired old man)

*Head to head or toe to toe
That is the way they usually go,
Safe and sound from season's storming,
Buried in stately, even rows.*

*Quickly, quickly, the maggots swarming —
Slowly, slowly, the mold starts forming,
Underground so safe, so sound,
The boneyard is the place to go.*

*And what kind visitors tread the ground?
Two lovers from a nearby town —
They warm the bones (though the night be chilly)
Lying over heads and toes.*

*(Plant my old carcass willy-nilly;
Head to toe is too damn silly)*

—Dean Cummings

Addie Wang and Helen Who

*Addie Wang and Helen Who were people
Unlike me or you;
For they danced a song of lightening bugs
And summer evening dew.*

*The night wind that caressed the trees
Had brought their song upon a breeze,
To brush my cheek and softly speak of thoughts
I could not see.*

*They fascinated me, those two;
My Addie Wang and Helen Who,
The music that they danced that night
Would always keep me true.*

*Such enchantment, did their music play
Upon my mind,
And how I wished for them to stay;
But they sipped the eve and slipped away
As night turned into day.*

*Addie Wang and Helen Who were people
Unlike me or you,
For they danced a song of lightening bugs
And summer evening dew.*

—Dean Cummings

"508"

On June 1, 1982, they tore down the house I was born in, the house my grandmother raised nine children in, lost her husband in, grew old in. No big deal. "Redevelopment," they said. I wished they'd said, "renewal"; it has such a hopeful ring to it. But "redevelop" means giving up on the past, starting all over. I wasn't there the day Progress drove down Columbus Avenue, leveling everything in its path: the old Hulls Brewery, grandma's house, my roots.

We were not shocked by the demolition. We'd been expecting it for almost two years, ever since the city "purchased" the house from grandma. Officials said it would be down within a few months, so my mother and father, who lived over grandma on the third floor, planned a big family Christmas celebration — a kind of Last Supper. Family began arriving about 11:00 in the morning that Christmas. They stayed until evening, spreading out into the second and third-floor apartments. I walked in late, to raucous laughter and popping flash bulbs everywhere. In the midst of the chaos my mother appeared, exhibiting a grace and dignity that I have never known to fail her, a grace that has always had a comforting effect on me. She fixed me up with food and drink, then left me to survey the rest of the crowd. Uncle Howard was there, with his vacant stare, a result of the war. And cousin Corey, whose wife left him shortly after his parents died. Then I caught a glimpse, through the scurrying bodies, of a small figure, in a chair, in the corner of the room — grandma, a bulwark of a woman. They would probably have to drag her from this place. I'd like to think she was inspecting her brood with matriarchal approval, but I think she wanted us all to leave so she could reconstruct the order she needed to survive and the memories she needed to live. I don't know how the rest of them felt, but I was glad the house was coming down. It seemed the only way my parents would leave the hellhole that my birthplace had become.

After Christmas we waited for the ax to fall. We waited through the rest of the winter. We waited through the spring that never seemed to warm Columbus Avenue and through the summer that never failed to burn it. Colorless autumn came and went. No one had the spirit for another Christmas celebration. Finally, early in 1982, my grandmother received official notification of the demolition date.

I was commissioned by the family to take pictures of the old three-story frame homestead before it was reduced to rubble. This sentimental request was delivered with puzzling stoicism. It reminded me of a woman I once knew who took pictures at her son's wake and showed them, with perfect equilibrium, to her neighbors. As I stood alone in front of the house, camera around my neck, I tried to muster up some emotion. But I was still glad the house was coming down. By now my parents and grandmother had moved out. Their last few months in the house were a nightmare. Surrounding houses were already demolished or abandoned. Fires were often set in the abandoned houses. Once, the flames leaped across a yard to grandma's house. My parents always took pains to make the house lived in, hoping that looters and arsonists, seeing signs of life, would wait. But would the rats? Displaced by fire and demolition, would they converge on grandma's house? It was so very, very difficult to focus on memories of my cousins and me at play in the back yard. I gave up, and began shooting the house. I shot it from every angle I could think of. I included the garage and

basement apartment, which my Uncle Norman still used as a base for his little roofing business. Then I moved in closer to include some personal details — the string of mailboxes with family names still on them, the big “508” near the front door. When I was through taking pictures, I paused to look around one last time. They had only one house left to demolish before they came to a dead stop at the cemetery. I smiled and left. The house came down.

It happens that I can see the rubble from the bus, on my way to work. The first time I saw it I felt disoriented, like those first few seconds, after emerging from a daydream, when you stand in awe of familiar surroundings. After a few more trips past the remains of grandma’s house, the reality of the loss settled in my mind, bringing with it a strong sense of resentment. Now, even that is gone. What I’m left with, astonishingly, is a feeling of liberation. My long-suffering friend is dead. No longer must I watch her pride be stripped away, her body assaulted. She no longer exists in the present, only in the past, the happy past. Reinstated to her former dignity, the house is brimming with activity. Corey and I are playing in the living room on the third floor, acting out our favorite T.V. commercial — “*I always come back for Pepsi-Cola.*”

Everything is all right now, for me. But it will be harder for grandma. On May 31, 1982 she phoned Norman at the house to remind him, when he left, to lock the doors.

— Cheryl Ann Quigley

On Wisdom

It is a popular misconception that wisdom is acquired merely by aging, automatically, with no extra effort.

The fact is, wisdom knows no age, and is timeless. It is acquired according to the frequency and sincerity of one's contemplation of their life experiences.

—Allan M. Chaneles

Erev Pessach

*I have not lit
the yahrtzeit candle;
three years
you've been gone.*

*The metal frames
you wore on your eyes
fit me now.*

*It is spring;
the holy land you never saw
in the Long Island prison blooms;
red flowers aspire heavens
on Mount Carmel.*

*How strange it would have been
if you had lived too long
to see me grown beyond my mourning!*

Keep your candle; take this.

—Adam Ben Adam

If Her Face Turned Red

It's been at least four and a half years since I last saw her. I can't remember her name. But that's not surprising since I never knew her well. But when I did know her (if only a little) and her name, she was "too young for me." That saying, "too young for me" I'm sure brings connotations to everyone's mind. We've all heard the phrase before. But four and a half years ago that phrase was a very powerful force in my life. It boomed in my head telling me "hands off." It wasn't something that had to be said out loud or even inferred. The guidelines were laid out and I followed them. I was 17, she was 13 and because she was only 13 she was beyond a certain line. She was too young and I should never touch her, or even think it. And, in fact, I didn't. From the first moment I saw her I subdued all impulses, subconsciously, automatically.

But I must have cared for her. Because swirling in the back of my memory is her face: chubby cheeks, freckles, small crinkled nose and big, round blue-gray eyes. There are many other faces in my past, in my memory. But most I don't care to focus on, why make the effort? But in her case there is no effort involved and that tells me that I must have cared. But social laws, if broken, carry stiff penalties. So the sound of her laughter was as close as I ever got.

Time is a never-ending march forward. Always concentrating on the present, always putting significance on the future and always making vague the past. It has caused me to forget other things besides her name, things that are more important to me. I can't remember the first time I saw her or the last. I can't remember how many times we spoke or what we spoke about. I can't remember the essence of a single one of our conversations. All that is left are a few scenes in my memory. Like a series of still pictures sliding through a projector. And a feeling, or actually two feelings. The way I felt when I saw her before she changed and the way I felt after.

One scene took place on a bus taking me, and several others, on a weekly roller skating outing. The bus was red and its' seats were green and torn and you bounced up and down in them whenever the bus hit a bump. It was an old bus and the "shocks" were bad so the bumps came often. The trips were at night but it wasn't ever dark inside due to the constant stream of neon flowing in from signs going by outside.

I was usually quiet on the bus although I was with a group of people who were my "friends." She was quiet, too. Quieter than I was. I would make an occasional joke or call someone an "asshole" for teasing me. But she was always silent. Some weeks the girls her age would talk to me and giggle and whisper to each other. Then they would tell me they were 15 when I knew that they weren't. Other weeks I would sit with her, for at least part of the trip. We would talk and her face would turn red and I would feel a hotness in my cheeks and know my face was red also. Then the other girls her age would lean over the back of their seats and show me their new hair-dos and tell me they were 15 or 16. And I would look at her hair which was straight and scraggly and hung down seemingly uncombed. She would never talk about her hair.

Another scene was in a small church where many of my friends were putting on a Christmas play. I didn't go to church so I wasn't in the play but I was there to watch. As I arrived and looked for a seat, I told myself I didn't belong in a church. I thought I should have been at a party, drinking. I'm sure I would have dwelled on that thought throughout the play had I not sat down next to her.

It was warm in the church. If you left your hand on the wooden pew too long, it would stick to the lacquer finish. The lights were dimmed for the play and I could barely see her sitting next to me. But we whispered back and forth and I made her laugh and she covered her mouth with her hand so her laughter wouldn't get us into trouble. She whispered to me to stop making her laugh and later she confessed that she had never laughed so much. "Why does it have to be now, when I can't laugh out loud? My sides hurt." The dim lights were yellow and her face was golden, so I couldn't tell if her face had turned red again. But I could see that her hair was still scraggly.

After the play was over I was with my friends, talking to a girl named Debbie (who everyone said liked me). The younger girls were giggling and telling me they were fifteen. I looked around and found her standing with her parents who were talking to another couple. I looked at her and decided it hadn't been such a bad idea to attend the play after all.

I didn't see her again for six months. I can't remember why exactly and it doesn't very much matter now. When I did see her again it was summer, June, at a picnic. It was overcast that day and warm and humid. It was early in the day and the grass was still wet. That meant that your sneakers got soaked and you didn't bend so much to field a ground ball. I was late, one of the last to arrive.

I had been there an hour and was having a good time playing softball, when I saw her. At first, as if I wasn't sure it was she, I moved for a closer look. But the closer look wasn't really necessary. I recognized her. I just didn't want to believe it was she. The uncombed hair had been replaced by a style that, I felt, made her look downright ugly. And she whispered with her friends and giggled. But it was her movements that shocked me more than anything else. They had always been so controlled, so inhibited, so "dainty" you might say. As I stood there I saw her run up to a boy, push him from behind and run back to her friends. Then whisper and giggle.

Almost in a daze I walked over to a tree, sat down and leaned against it. One phrase repeated over in my head, "She's changed," until finally I was forced to say it aloud, "She's changed!" I didn't like it, I knew that. "Innocence," that's the word I used, "She's lost her innocence." "Conformity," I thought of that too, "She's conformed but she doesn't need to be like everyone else." Right then I wanted to spring up and talk to her, tell her she didn't have to fix up her hair and act like everyone else; I certainly didn't! But instead of springing up I sat there and realized that was exactly why I wouldn't talk to her, because I didn't.

She was growing up (she was 14 by then) and she was probably able to see that being shy would not lead to happiness. The change seemed startling to me, like night and day. But for her it was probably slow and difficult. In the long run it didn't really matter whether her new outgoing image was just a cover-up, make-up to hide her fear. Because if she kept it up long enough the day would come when no make-up would be needed. She may not always have been sure of what she was doing or if it was right. But I'm sure she could see things. See that a person who doesn't make contact is left alone. It goes beyond being right or wrong. Fixing her hair and giggling had become necessary to her.

All at once I knew exactly why I felt so badly. She was shedding her inhibitions, while I still had mine. She was advancing and leaving me behind.

Later that day, just before it began to rain, just after I had tried to talk to a girl named Beth but had failed miserably, I turned around and she was standing in front of me. She told me she had just turned sixteen and that I was cute. Then she ran over to her friends to whisper and giggle.

Now I'm pulling at my memory, but I can't recall, when she spoke to me then, if her face turned red.

— B. J. Levine

To the Children of the Leading Edge

*When in the season of the age
it is found compelling to harvest the boasts
and pluck the visions held in revolutions,*

question the sowers course.

*In the silence of the christening hour
question the warcries that drive you
In the need of the christening hour
question Byronic heroes that lead you.*

unbridled wish, seething wants, breeds infectious sham.

*In the darkness of the christening hour,
question crystal visions revealed to you
In the loss of the christening hour
question craving infants that "give" to you.*

*Sleep uneasy on change's rocky ledge;
beware open minds which lift themselves above suspicion,*

*soldiers of the Avant Guard or children of the leading edge
this is your decision.*

— Mark Cherry

Bitter Man's Credo

*Mean man kind man, (just to set the stage)
Master man slave man,
which one shall we save,
Old man, pack your grudges to your grave.*

*Forgive your enemies
forgive their fangs.*

Only after you've seen them hanged.

— Mark Cherry

The Best Friend

*You can reject your friends
I'll help you hate them,*

*You can slide under depression
I'll feed your obsession.*

*You can defame yourself
I will not fight
You can blame yourself
I'll say your right
And I wouldn't dare, to tell you
to hang, stick, or be in there.*

*You can take your life
I'll aim at your heart
And yes, I'll hold the knife*

But please wait until after the best part.

— Mark Cherry

Beyond Bitterness

*sometimes when my goals haze
i hearken back to my early days
to the milky ways of wifedom
and motherhood.*

*before st. luke's i watch the young
attempt to do what i have not done
and i wish them luck.
i drink from their loving cup.*

*then home to fill my own
with even more than i had before —
myself.*

— Cheryl Ann Quigley

The Verdict Is In

*fatuation. Not one dissenting vote for love.
Even my beloved stated
that I was just infatuated
with him.*

So why the tears?

*I say I'll never love like that again
and they say next time it will be different
but bitter . . . I mean BETTER!*

I'm still waiting.

— Cheryl Ann Quigley

Friendship and Falsehood Inspired by "Tootsie": A Speculation

R. A. Paglia

Films serve many purposes the most prominent one being artistic. Certainly the artistry of a film needs to be carefully examined and critics exhibit sufficient rigor in their reviews to indicate that artistry in a film is indeed being scrutinized. When utilizing a term such as "artistry" the implication conveyed is that emphasis is being placed upon how each aspect of the film contributes to the coalescence of the cinematic whole. If all aspects dovetail nicely the film is bequeathed a positive sanction. There are situational instances however in which a film may be considered a worthwhile viewing experience on the basis of only several or just one of the numerous aspects or components which comprises the film. One such component is the theme or "message" which presumably overrides the other aspects of the film and is invoked many times by overzealous philosophers in the hope of discovering the "treatise" behind the craft. Certainly many debates can be advanced regarding the tug of war between the value of thematic content as opposed to the value of artistic form. Perhaps this opposition may be only epistemologically apparent but metaphysically non-existent. This perennial conflict notwithstanding films may be appreciated for their thematic capacity and thereby inform, instruct, inspire or provoke viewers as to where they are philosophically, psychologically and sociologically. Films can provide viewers with barometric readings for the philo-psycho-socio-cultural climate in which viewers find themselves. One such film that may be considered as a catapult for projecting the viewer into the realm of speculation and reflection is "Tootsie". Perhaps no other popular film to date has so benignly yet effectively presented the viewer with a cinematic source for reflecting upon the significance of falsehood and the meaning of friendship. Since the subtitle of this essay is "A Speculation" the writer is liberated from the parochialism of a "thesis" to the more catholic

considerations which form an overriding thematic question inspired by the film: Is friendship based upon a continually or continuously unfolding series of indiscriminate and thereby "true" particular incidents and aspects associated with an individual designated as "friend"; or is friendship based upon a "selective" and thereby "false" repertoire of incidents and aspects of an individual designated as "friend?" The purpose of the succeeding text will be to explore the meaning of friendship, in the context of the preceding, thematic question, in terms of a synopsis of "Tootsie" and engage in philosophical and psychological speculation regarding the nature of friendship. In so doing an answer not be so readily forthcoming, but the dilemma of the question may be more readily appreciated.

"Tootsie" features Dustin Hoffman portraying an erratically employed character actor who firmly resolves that he will acquire steady employment no matter what. The "what" turns out to be a female disguise Hoffman uses to deceive casting agents. The deception works and Hoffman is hired as one of the "actresses" on a local T.V. soap opera. Hoffman has a girlfriend, portrayed by Teri Garr, but he becomes attracted to one of the actresses in the Soap Opera, portrayed by Jessica Lange. Hoffman's attraction for Lange persists, despite her own romantic encumbrance with someone else. As Hoffman's attraction for Lange increases so does the soap opera's ratings and Hoffman finds his female impersonation achieving super-star status. Everyone loves "her" and no one knows she's a he. Meanwhile Hoffman is becoming frustrated. He wants to reveal himself as a man to Lange. Yet she has grown so fond of Hoffman in his deception as female that Lange continues to share more and more secrets, female-to-"female", with Hoffman. The faith and sense of security Hoffman's "Tootsie" has generated with

Lange makes Hoffman balk at the risk of losing Lange in the trauma of exposure. Hoffman continues to play the role, all too well as he becomes the amorous object of several "mature" males one of whom is Lange's widowed father, portrayed by Charles Durning. As pressures build all around Hoffman and Lange confront each other in a pivotal scene which depicts Hoffman in female impersonation attempting to comfort a depressed Lange. Struggling to suppress his manliness Hoffman attempts to kiss Lange who interprets the gesture as an act of lesbian aggression, becomes upset, evasive and plunges Hoffman into further depths of deception. This scene provides the impetus for Hoffman ultimately to reveal himself as a man to Lange. She is now further shocked and disoriented; but as the movie concludes there is the intimation that Lange will accept Hoffman as a man and a conventional romance will ensue.

The significant issue in "Tootsie" is that Hoffman has achieved a profound friendship with Lange based upon a disguise; i.e., a "selected" series of aspects reinforced indefinitely to project an image that does not correspond to the factual reality of Hoffman's gender. A true friendship has evolved from a falsehood. Lange continues to confide in Hoffman-as-female and shares true statements about her life with Hoffman's false image. Hoffman is in the unique position of being able to perceive a female's personhood devoid of the typical defense mechanisms and strategic fictions which would be inevitable if Lange realized Hoffman were a man instead of the "woman" he projects himself to be.

There have been other films in which men have disguised themselves as women in order to gain some strategic advantage over the women. But "Tootsie" presents significant differences. Hoffman's original purpose for the disguise is to acquire employment. He

retains the disguise in order to remain employed but also preserve the ever-increasing, special friendship he has formed with Lange, which he never originally intended. Thus, the perpetuation of Hoffman-as-female comes to serve not only the acquisition of pre-meditated continued employment but the presentation of a spontaneously evolving relationship, which although focused on a conventional female cannot be expressed in a conventional manner. Hoffman has been false to his employers and false to Lange; yet he is truly successful as a soap opera "actress" and "female" confidant. Honesty, in the conventional sense, risks termination of employment and friendship. Yet when Hoffman does reveal himself to be a man on T.V., before a viewing public, the positive viewer impact of such a revelation only serves to fortify his status as a performer. Hence, honesty merely becomes another strategic ploy or falsehood. But what will happen now that Hoffman has revealed himself as a man to Lange? Can his continued success as a T.V. actor persist in his at-long-last established man-woman relationship with Lange? Can Lange ever again confide in Hoffman-the-man as she did in Hoffman-as-woman? Are woman-to-woman and man-to-man exchanges the only ones where true friendship is indeed revealed and man-woman exchanges essentially ones where only strife occurs? A falsehood depicted in "Tootsie" secures friendship, whereas the eventual sooth-saying of manhood at the end of the film doesn't necessarily suggest the same sense of security and warmth which occurred in the falsehood at the film's beginning.

As should now be apparent "Tootsie" is a film which when reflected upon forces us to examine the meaning of friendship. Do we make friends on the basis of common interest, but beyond that interest do we entertain a virtually indiscriminate unfolding of the friend's personality and behavior? In other words, beyond the con-

venience of mutual interest do we tend to accept any and every character trait our friends may exhibit at one time or another? If we do we would be in accordance with Philosopher Alfred North Whitehead who claimed that not enough attention was given to the appreciation of concrete particulars. Whitehead felt that abstractions were too “selective” or “false” and thereby excluded too much of the world from consideration. Therefore, on a Whiteheadian basis, we should accept and affirm each concrete, particular, character trait and behavioral gesture of our friends revealed in an ever-increasing series of “true” instances of social interaction. But does this satisfy the concept of friendship?

Aristotle claimed a friend was another self. This would mean that individuals we consider to be our friends reflect qualities within us. Since each of us is supposedly different, to a greater or lesser degree, our friendships may be interrupted as the result of value judgments or “selections” we have made regarding with whom we wish to be associated personally or publically. On this basis we would be quite motivated to “select” individuals who fulfill the criteria we have constructed for our notion of friendship. But of course selection implies editing or omitting extraneous or irrelevant data from the preferred model. Hence, our “friend” becomes what philosopher Bertrand Russell termed a “logical construct”, i.e., a nicely-packaged unit that reveals only what we want or expect to be revealed. Our friend is essentially an abstraction, a thing which we expect or insist be a certain way and no other way. In short, we have constructed a “falsehood” as our ideal for friendship. We select or only tolerate those aspects of the individual we feel qualifies him for admittance to our good, fraternal will and disregard, avoid or rationalize any characteristics that appear to be at odds with our constructed image of the friend.

Psychologists may argue that absorbing the totality of particular instances about someone or some situation may threaten to overwhelm us whereas nice, selected “packages” of a certain person allow us to receive that person in a way that is mentally and emotionally rationed and organized enough to secure psychological stability. Yet truth has a way of invading our contrived falsehoods. A man who exclaims shock when he learns his next-door neighbor and presumed friend has just committed mass murder is being traumatized by an unexpected series of particulars suddenly collid-

ing with what had previously been a secure, selected, packaged unit of what or whom that neighbor purported to be. But the "truth" of the neighbor's being obviously extended far beyond the boundaries of the man's "false", convenient conception. The implication here is that "true" mental health depends upon a kind of falsehood and when the preceding remarks are linked with the issue of friendship the inference seems inexorably to yield to the notion that social relationships in general and friendship in particular are founded upon for purposes of perpetuation.

"Tootsie" is a film that provides viewers with a cinematic catapult that projects the viewer into a realm of self-inventory and social inquiry pertaining to the issues of friendship and falsehood. These two issues persist as objects of academic analysis and as forces that consciously or unconsciously influence our behavior. The effort to analyze falsehood and its relation to friendship provides what may be termed a verbal prelude to some plan of action or resolution. This prelude allows the opportunity to evaluate our inclination to the non-selective continuous series of particular aspects of anyone we consider a friend or our preference for a more selective process by which we establish definite criteria for friendship and rigorously "edit" any factors that would compromise our conception of a friend. The common bias suggests the more we know about someone the closer we are to the "truth" of that individual. However, opposition to that common bias suggests the "essential truth" is ironically situated in the falsehood of the selected image. In other words our manufactured model of our friend is supposed to provide us with all we need or want to know about someone for that person to qualify as a friend. To consider the falsehood-friendship issue a conflict implies a possible solution; to consider the issue a dilemma is by definition to assert a problem with no solution. As this tug of war persists in us a film such as "Tootsie" transcends itself as a cinematic art form and becomes pure, reflective forum.

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Bathing

the v of my lower limbs frames a silver spigot —

no, two.

one cold and stark as truth

*its watery image as elusive as the why
of my existence.*

obscuring this vision my tumbleweed glistens.

by freak of nature transposed

from home atop tawny desert

skin

to sail upon spread-eagled sea.

the tub tide rushes and ebbs

with each submerged breath.

i feel its soothing rhythm while drooping

eyes fix on the unaffected stillness

of my tiny navel pool.

slide

deeply in

wetly warm.

— Cheryl Ann Quigley

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it
stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast
surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament,
filament, out of itself
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly
speeding them.
And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless
oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing
seeking the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd,
till the ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling
catch somewhere, O my soul.

Walt Whitman